

plan was to' bring about the freedom of the negroes by gradual emancipation.* He. drew up and offered a bill preventing the further importation of slaves by sea or land. This bill, which readily passed, was intended as the first of a series that should remove every vestige of slavery from, the State. His scheme, briefly stated, was to> regard as lawfully free all slave-born children, to educate them at the public expense, and when they were grown, to> transplant them to> some distant and isolated colony where they might enjoy under a mild protectorate the privileges of self-government. He did not believe that the negro could live as a free man side by side with the white man, but he did most sincerely believe that he ought to be free. And he believed that he would be free. "Nothing," he said, "was more clearly written in the: book of fate." Very little nevertheless, came of his elaborate scheme for emancipation. "The public mind would not bear it," he. said; and it. does not appear that after the Revolutionary period he was ever very industrious in his efforts to prepare the public mind to bear it.

A bill that was dearer even to> Jefferson's heart than that for the freedom of the slaves was one for the diffusion of knowledge.! He saw that a democracy must rest upon the enlightenment of the masses and he brought forward his system; free elementary schools for all the children of the State for a. term of three years; high schools at convenient places for superior and ambitious youths; a State university at the top. Many States of the Union, have adopted this system, but Virginia was not prepared for it when Jefferson proposed it. The measure failed in the legislature more completely than any of its author's cherished reforms.

Early in 1777 Jefferson proposed to the legislature a complete revision of the laws of Virginia. The proposal was adopted, and he was appointed chairman of the revising committee. His colleagues on. the committee were Edmund Pendleton, George Wythe, George Mason and T. L. Lee.

*See Emancipation, page
201. tSee Slavery, page
382. JSee Education, page
194.